Students who are Refugees

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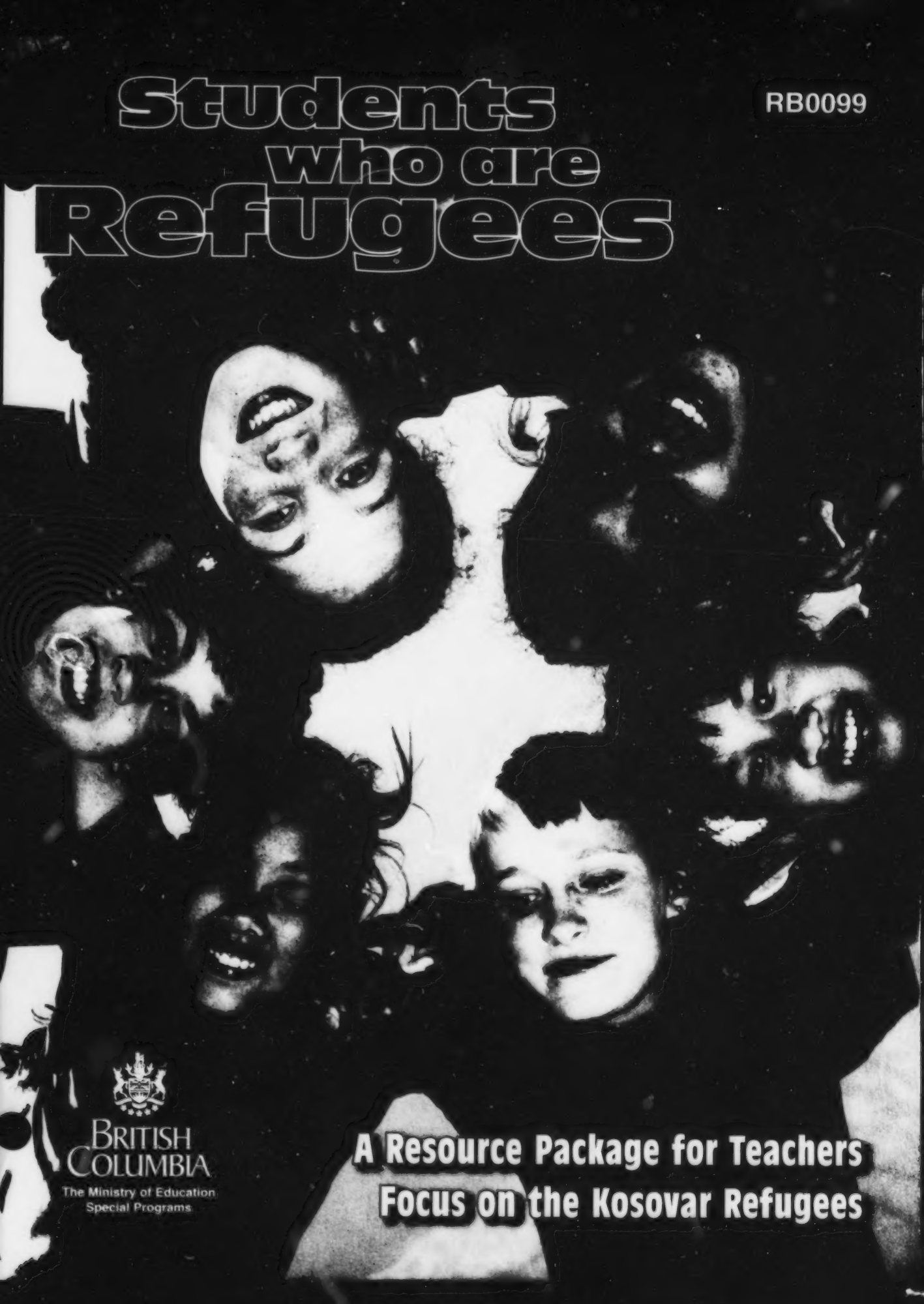

BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Ministry of Education
Special Programs

A Resource Package for Teachers
Focus on the Kosovar Refugees

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Students Who Are Refugees: A Resource Package for Teachers

Focus on the Kosovar Refugees

BRITISH COLUMBIA
Ministry of Education
Special Programs

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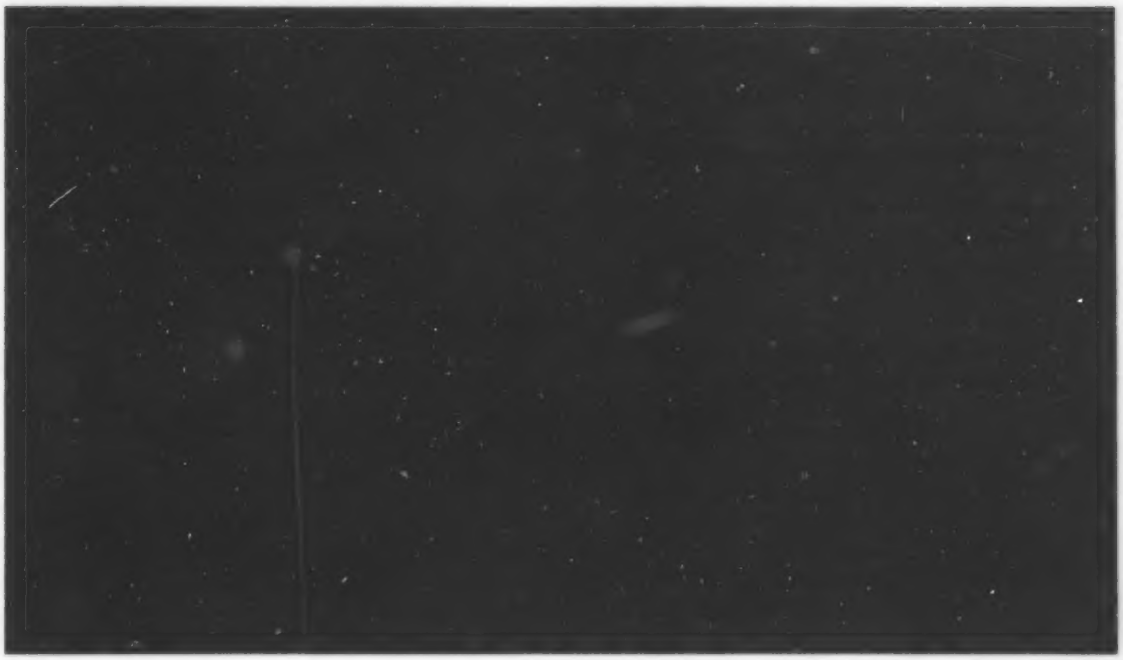
Introduction

The purpose of this resource package is to

- Provide background information about refugees, especially Kosovar refugees;
- Support teachers in their work with refugee children; and
- Provide strategies for teachers who work with refugee children.

This resource package is for teachers and other school staff. Through the years educators in British Columbia have worked with many immigrant children and some refugee children. While there may seem to be similarities between the two groups, they are in fact different.



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Refugees and Immigrants: Similarities and Differences

Immigrants	Refugees
■ Most personal business is taken care of before leaving	■ Personal business unsettled; must leave in a hurry
■ Education usually not interrupted	■ Interrupted education - due to waiting time in camps or while leaving home country
■ Adjustment to new culture may be easier	■ Adjustment to new culture/country could be very difficult due to traumatic experiences
■ Sense of loss is not necessarily traumatic	■ Sense of loss is profound; may include family members as well as personal property
■ Repatriation is a matter of personal choice	■ Repatriation is not an option unless the crisis situation has stablilized or ended

"Refugees don't have the luxury of time. In most cases, they must leave in a hurry.

Immigrants usually decide to leave their native country in search for a better way of life or to reunite with their families in foreign lands. In most of these cases, the decision is based on acquiring something they do not have, availing themselves of opportunities not found in their countries, or just seeing what life is like elsewhere. Immigrants usually have the time to decide if they are making the right decision. They also have the time to say goodbye to their families and friends.

Refugees don't have the luxury of time. In most cases, they must leave in a hurry. They may have little opportunity to gather their families, their important papers, money, and other belongings before they have to flee. Even as they are leaving their home, the dangers are many. They could become targets of those who want them out. They could be stopped by the authorities and become separated from their loved ones. They could be tortured, persecuted and demeaned in horrific ways.

Refugees

In general, refugees are persons who seek refuge or asylum outside their homeland in order to escape persecution. The Geneva Convention definition, recognized worldwide, follows:

In 1951, the United Nations created the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) as part of its recognition of the importance of refugee demographics in our modern world. This agency monitors the movement of refugees from around the world. Its main purpose is to provide support in the management of refugee populations in order to monitor demographic changes in regions of the worlds, and to try to ensure regional demographic balance. It also provides advice and support to nations willing to help refugees. In the case of the Kosovars, the UNCHR was very concerned about their safety as well as about moving large numbers too far from their homeland.

The Somalis, Kurds, Central and South Americans, Vietnamese and many others from around the world are also refugees who have been permitted to come and stay in Canada.

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The Geneva Convention Definition of a Refugee, 1951, 1967

A refugee is a person who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside his country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence..., is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, January 31, 1967. Source: UNHCR News: Kosovo Crisis Update, **www.unhcr.ch** Aug. 2, 1999.

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The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)

- Created in 1951
- Responsible for re-settling 1.2 million refugees after WW II
- Mandate increased in 1967 to include all refugee situations
- Responsible today for 22.7 million people in 140 countries
- Sedako Ogata from Japan is the High Commissioner

Source: UNHCR History: **www.unhcr.ch** Aug. 2, 1999.

Origin of the Ten Largest Refugee Populations

- Afghanistan
- Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Burundi
- Croatia
- Iraq
- Liberia
- Sierra Leone
- Somalia
- Sudan
- Vietnam

Source: UNHCR by Numbers, **www.unhcr.ch** Aug. 2, 1999.

Living outside one's home country is difficult at times. When the future is uncertain, when there is nowhere to go, and when a person may be completely unwelcomed at any one of the possible sanctuaries, living outside one's home can be intolerable. To many refugees, the experience of living in a camp may seem like the beginning of a long journey to nowhere. New patterns of survival, new relations with neighbours, and new dependencies and alliances have to be established. Refugee relief agencies do their best to bring normalcy to a new existence perceived as uncertain and sometimes chaotic.

In the case of the Kosovars, the persecution was directed at an entire population: ethnic Albanians were specifically targeted. There were also other minorities that sought refuge abroad for fear they too would be targeted. These include families of mixed backgrounds, persons whose names could make them stand out, and persons whose political views could single them out in some way.

The Kosovars are refugees because they have been persecuted, victimized, and forced out of their homeland. They have lost property and a means for earning a living.

Kosovo

As we learn about other cultures we need to be sensitive to the fact that not all people from a particular culture or society behave in the same way. Just as regions and peoples within Canada manifest a variety of cultures and social behaviours, even though we share many common characteristics, so are there regional and cultural variations within Kosovar society and other Balkan nations.

History

The current situation in Kosovo has its roots in the historical conflicts among the many ethnic groups which make up the Balkan region. The defining episode occurred

History at a Glance

100's	Region occupied by Romans
1389	Battle of Kosovo: Ottomans gain control of Kosovo
1912	Ottomans lost Kosovo which becomes part of Albania
1918	Kosovo becomes part of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes
1929	Yugoslavia is formed
1939-45	Kosovo assigned to Albania
1946	Tito becomes President
1974	Kosovo given autonomy
1980	Tito dies
1989	Milosovich rises to power; Kosovo's autonomy is revoked
1991	Macedonia declares independence; becomes Former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia
1992	Bosnia-Herzegovina declares independence; Serbia and Montenegro form the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; Croatia becomes independent; Kosovo wants independence or to be annexed by Albania. Independence is denied.
1999	NATO bombs Serbia and Kosovo; mass exodus within a few weeks

Sources: Adapted from *Yugoslavia*, Encarta Encyclopedia, 1997 edition, and *A Brief Cultural and Historical Profile*, The Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, 1999; Timeline: Kosovo Crisis. **www.newsworld.cbc.ca** July 12, 1999.

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KOSOVAR LANGUAGE

- Indo-European family
- Two Albanian dialects
  Gheg – spoken in northern Albania and Kosovo
  Tosk – spoken in southern Albania; used as the standard dialect for all regions
- Some vocabulary not found in other Indo-European languages
- Many words are borrowed from Latin, Greek, Turkish, and the Slavic languages
- Roman Alphabet

SOURCES: Adapted from Kalzner, K. *The Languages of the World*, p.95 and p.101.

over 600 years ago when the expanding Ottoman Empire defeated the Serbs at the Battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389. This led to Turkish control over much of southeastern Europe and left a legacy of the Islamic faith, cultural values and social structures. Many, especially ethnic Albanians, converted to Islam while the Serbs remained staunchly Greek Orthodox and looked at Kosovo as hallowed ground of Serb resistance to the Muslim Ottomans.

Throughout much of the 19th century, the Balkans were the focus of rivalry by the Ottoman, Austrian and Russian empires. By the early 20th century, surging ethnic nationalism increased resentment against the great powers, and by 1913, the Ottoman Empire had lost nearly all its European territory. The country of Albania was created but Kosovo was incorporated into Serbia. After World War I (1914-18), Kosovo, in spite of its largely Albanian population, was included in the newly created Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which in 1929 became the country of Yugoslavia, and which was largely dominated by Serbs. World War II (1939-45) further complicated relations among the peoples of Yugoslavia as some groups, particularly the Serbs, fought a partisan war against the occupying armies of Nazi Germany and its allies.

The leader of the anti-Nazi partisans, Tito, emerged as the leader of the newly established Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia after World War II. Although Yugoslavia had a communist government, it was largely independent of the Soviet Union. Under Tito, Yugoslavia's nationalities were treated in an even-handed manner, and in 1974 the province of Kosovo was granted autonomy within Yugoslavia.

With the coming to power of Slobodan Milosevic in Yugoslavia in 1989, Serb nationalism was encouraged, while ethnic Albanians and other ethnic groups in Yugoslavia

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became increasingly restive. The disintegration of Yugoslavia began in earnest during the early 1990s with Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina declaring independence and a vicious ethnic war erupting in Bosnia. Also, in 1989, Kosovo was stripped of its autonomy and the ever more stifling grip on Kosovo by the Milosevic-led Yugoslavia government fueled Kosovar resentment against the Serbs. The stage was set for the bloody conflict which erupted in 1999.

Society

Kosovo is known as Kosova to its residents. The largest number of Kosovars are ethnic Albanians. The ethnic Albanians in Kosovo largely follow the Islamic faith, with many of the religious practices being embedded in the social fabric of that society. Ethnic Albanians are also of European origin and share many customs with other Mediterranean cultures.

"In a patriarchal society loyalty to the family and clan is expected and is of paramount importance.

Although Kosovar society is essentially patriarchal (i.e., power and possessions are passed down from the head of the family, the father, to his sons) in the last few decades it has become less so, especially in urban areas. In a patriarchal society loyalty to the family and clan is expected and is of paramount importance. A patriarch heads large extended families – sometimes up to forty people. When the patriarch dies, his wife, the matriarch, takes over and makes all decisions for the family.

Law and order are maintained through unwritten codes of conduct which include personal honor, equality of persons (before the law), freedom to act, and word of honor. Other customs have origins in the Muslim and Slavic influences.

Although there are a few inter-ethnic marriages, most marriage partners are selected from within their religious

community. Many inter-ethnic families have fled the region precisely because of fear that they would not be accepted by any group.

Kosovo has one of the lowest educational standards in Europe. As expected, urban schools have a greater exposure to foreign influences than rural schools. Government control of education led to massive school closures in 1991. Albanian-language education was suspended and school hours were reduced to two hours a day.

Kosovar Refugees

The majority of the Kosovar refugees who fled to the neighbouring countries of Montenegro, Macedonia, and Albania are ethnic Albanians. Other groups include the Roma, also known as gypsies.

Reports from refugee camps suggest that the conditions were nearing, or at, crisis levels. Food and medication were in short supply during the early days of the crisis. People had to wait as camps were being created throughout the countryside. Because the numbers were too high for any one nation to receive, eventually neighbouring nations had to close their doors. It then became necessary to airlift Kosovars to places far from their home. Germany and Italy were among the first NATO countries to agree to accept refugees. Five thousand refugees were brought to Canada.

Kosovar Refugees in Canada

Kosovar refugees who have arrived in Canada came from both urban (about 40 percent) and rural (about 60 percent) settings. They entered Canada as one of the following three groups: 'fast track,' Operation Parasol, or under special consideration. The fast track (or family reunification) group came directly to their families. The number of fast track arrivals to BC was about 370. An additional 150 are expected by January 2000. The Operation Parasol group was processed either at the Canadian Forces Base Trenton, Ontario, or the Canadian Forces Base Greenwood, Nova Scotia. They are being sponsored by churches and individuals. The goal of the Government of Canada was to have joint sponsorship for the refugees so that they would have more than one support mechanism. Over 500 people in the Parasol group are expected to arrive in BC. A third group of refugees was given special consideration because they have experienced a different level of trauma, including surviving a massacre.

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Education in Kosovo

The last decade has seen the decline of education in Kosovo. The educational situation was brought to the attention of UNESCO's Director-General in a letter sent by Abdyl Ramaj, Secretary of the Commission for Education of Democratic League of Kosova, and Head of Parliamentary Commission for Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Kosova on August 12, 1997. The letter was also sent to several embassies in Belgrade. Highlights of the letter follow.

1991 Twenty-eight percent of all graduating primary students were permitted to attend secondary schools;

1991 University of Pristina was closed by government; it continued to work underground with existing faculty and students; 396 full-classes, 454 four-year and annex primary schools, 56 secondary schools, teachers training and engineering colleges, and 13 faculties closed down;

1992 Six out of sixty-six secondary schools opened to students; other classes held in private homes; two school buildings are very old (about to fall).

1996 An Education Agreement signed by Rugova, Kosovo President, and Milosevic. According to UNESCO no progress was shown.

From 1991 to 1997 education continued to operate from private homes. There were also student and teacher protests. The closing down of schools also resulted in massive unemployment.

Sources: Albanian Language Education in Kosova, Abbyl Ramaj, August 12, 1997, **www.alb-net.com** and UNESCOPRESS On-line, July, 1997 **edweb@www.education.unesco.org**

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KOSOVAR REFUGEES AS OF JULY 29, 1999

- Ethnic Albanians – 900,000
- Roma and Serbs – 155,000

SOURCE: UNHCR News, **www.unhcr.ch** Aug. 2, 1999.

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ANTICIPATED KOSOVAR REFUGEE CHILDREN IN BC

Pre-schoolers	84
Grades K-7	147
Grades 8-10	56
Grades 11-12	50
Total	337

Numbers are approximate and may be lower due to the repatriation of Kosovars.

SOURCE: Adapted from Immigrant Services Society, July 21, 1999.

About 250 children attended BC schools in the fall of 1999. Approximately 60 percent of these children are in the K-7 range. Most of the refugee families settled in the Fraser Valley, Vancouver Island, the Okanagan, the Lower Mainland and the Prince George area.

Working with Refugee Children

While learning the English language is an obvious need, refugee children also have other needs that may impact on their ability to benefit from our school system.

> *"The feelings that these children have ...could manifest into behaviours which may seem unexplainable and erratic.*

Adjusting to a New Culture

Adjusting to a new culture involves several stages. The most relevant stages to the school environment are the initial one, upon arrival, and that which immediately follows.

Upon arrival, children and their families may feel happy that they are safe and away from the situation which caused their anguish and distress. There is a great deal of optimism because they may now begin new lives. This initial stage may not last long, and depends on the circumstances in the new environment, such as how safe they feel, how easy it is to fit in, how many friends they make, and how stable their home is.

The stage that follows may be the most critical for refugee children in that they, along with their families, may feel estranged in their new environment. They may feel safe, and are beginning new lives, but everything is different from what they are used to. The culture, the language, the people, the customs and expectations are all new. As a result, children may experience shock. This is the stage in which the behaviours associated with the experiences of trauma will begin to manifest and blossom.

When providing service to refugee children, it is important to understand their needs fully. The second stage of adjustment is the point at which teachers and

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other school staff need to have the greatest empathy and understanding. The feelings that these children have, and may not necessarily express, could manifest into behaviours which may seem unexplainable and erratic.

Psychological Effects

Psychologists who have worked with victims of war, violence and crime use the term *post traumatic stress disorder* (PTSD) to describe the condition suffered by many of the victims. Not everyone in a war environment, however, will experience stress in the same way, nor will they react the same way to the same experiences. A few, including children, will be able to deal with their experiences and move on with their lives. On the other extreme are those

sufferers who are not able to deal with their lives in meaningful ways because the horror of their experiences is too much to bear. Many adults and children fall somewhere in the middle, exhibiting post-traumatic stress in a variety of ways at different times in their lives.

There is no cure for trauma. However, there is a need for victims to learn to care for themselves and move on. (Dr. Yaya de Andrade, Lecture notes. PTSD Workshop, April 28, 1995).

Teachers are not psychologists and cannot provide therapy, but can, and will likely need to, deal with some of the behaviours and associated feelings related to trauma, which the children may exhibit. The teacher's understanding and patience could be tested to the highest degree. Also, recognizing when to refer children for additional service is critical at this stage. Trauma may lie hidden for the most part, but may manifest itself through seemingly unrelated behaviours. These behaviours may be emotional, cognitive, physical and/or interpersonal.

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Culture Shock

Stages which students may go through as they learn to adapt to a new culture

Optimism, Excitement	Refugees...are filled with hopes for a new life and new opportunities. Excitement and optimism replace the anxiety felt before their arrival. They believe they can overcome all obstacles and that everything will be fine.
Culture Shock	Students experience culture shock. Everything around them in their new environment is different. This includes behaviours, culture, language, and values.
Superficial Adjustment	Students attempt to make adjustments. Changes are superficial; everything is interpreted in terms of their own perspectives.
Frustration, Depression	Students begin encountering the problems of daily living in a new country: language, discrimination, parental unemployment and setbacks in their attempt to fit in the educational system. Stress leads to frustration and depression.
Acceptance of Host Culture	Students accept and identify with host culture, eventually leading to integration. They start to go beyond superficial adjustments to readjust their outlook on life in order to be part of and fit in with the host culture, without totally giving up their own cultural identity.

Source: Adapted with permission from Helmer, S. and Eddy, C. *Look at Me When I Talk to You: ESL Learners in Non-ESL Classrooms*, pp.15-16. Note: This book also contains other examples of culture shock and behaviours associated with it.

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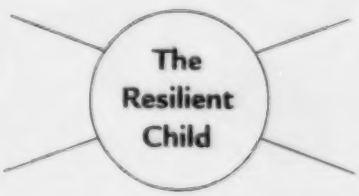
Assumptions We Tend to Have about the World

- The world is OK
- My life is meaningful
- I am worthy
- People can be trusted

If one or more of the above are violated, the result may be traumatic experiences.

Source: Dr. Yaya de Andrade. Lecture notes, PTSD Workshop, April 28, 1995.

Profile of a Resilient Child



Problem-solving Skills
- ability to develop alternative solutions
- to survive, stay alive, etc.

Autonomy
- independence/internal locus of control
- can act independently to control

Social Competence
- empathy
- care
- humour
- good communication skills

Sense of Purpose/Future
- hopefulness
- goal directed
- anticipation of future

Source: Adapted from presentation notes, Dr. Yaya de Andrade, 1999.

"The first step for teachers is to know the children they are teaching and how to proceeed.

Following are a few of possible behaviours manifested by refugee children.

- Difficulty in concentrating and completing tasks;
- Avoidance of particular activities and situations;
- Complaints of physical ailments, e.g. headaches, vomiting and stomachaches;
- Irritability, hyper-alertness;
- Impaired memory;
- Exaggerated startle responses;
- Preoccupation with violent events (conversations, drawings);
- Unrealistic worries about possible harm to self and others;
- Signs of excessive distress upon separation or when anticipating separation from parent; and
- Recollection of traumatic events

Source: Adapted from *Survivors of Natural Disasters*, National Center for PTSD: **www.darmouth.edu** July 12, 1999 and Geoff Jopson, Lecture notes, March 5, 1991.

Students who manifest the above behaviours may be experiencing

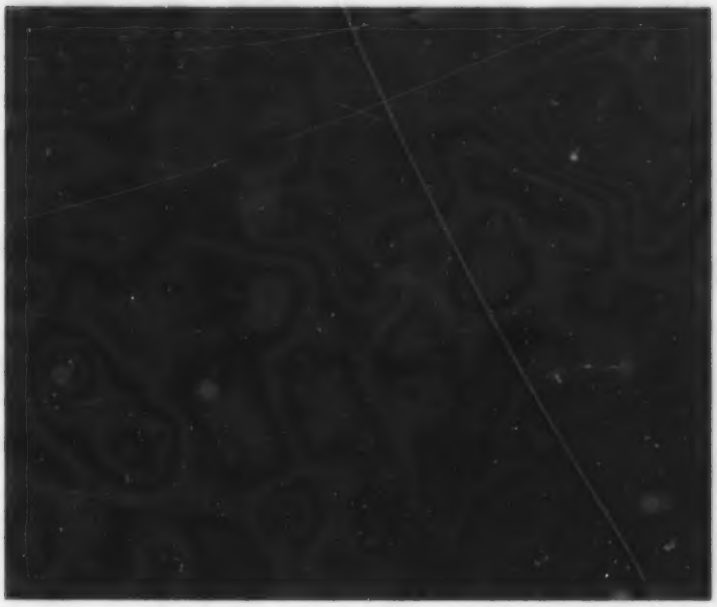
- Violent nightmares or flashbacks
- Disturbing memories
- Feelings of being in danger
- Feelings of betrayal
- Anger
- Denial

Source: Adapted from PTSD in Children, National Center for PTSD: **www.darmouth.edu** July12, 1999.

Another cause of additional stress arises when refugees are given the opportunity to either return home or remain in the host country. Now that it is possible to return to Kosovo, all Kosovar refugees in Canada will need to make that choice within the next two years. A few of the 5,000

Kosovars have returned, or are planning to return, to Kosovo. These are mostly heads of families who are going back on their own to check on the possessions and family members they had to leave behind.

For refugee children in particular, any resemblance of their new environment to anything they experienced in their homeland or upon leaving their homeland may have detrimental effects. The following are some of the school-based triggers that could affect refugee children.



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School-based Triggers

- a dark hallway
- a uniformed policeman coming to or being in school
- the sound of bootlike footsteps
- fire bells
- earthquake drills or any evacuation procedures
- groups of children talking loudly
- any situation which may seem out of control, like children "horsing around"
- other children staring at them
- not understanding English, or some of the other languages children speak
- outside the classroom
- body language which may be misinterpreted

Triggers and Buffers

Triggers may cause individuals to relive traumatic experiences. Different events and circumstances may trigger some unwanted experience in a refugee child.

A way to counteract an unwanted triggered experience is to create buffers.

Buffers are predictive experiences such as following a schedule, knowing that dismissal bells go off at the same time everyday, classroom routines. Teachers can help refugee children deal with their traumatic experience by creating buffers.

Source: Adapted from a conversation with Dr. Yaya de Andrade, Psychologist, July 26, 1999.

Refugee Children in Schools

CAUTION

The impact of traumatic experiences may also have an effect on:

- **Other refugee children**
- **Immigrant children**
- **Children whose relatives are or have been refugees**
- **Children with relatives unable to leave war-torn regions**
- **The teacher**
- **Other children and school staff**

There are a few things teachers can do as soon as refugee children arrive. While in school, refugee children will spend a great deal of time in the classroom, so what goes on there is very important. Much of the children's initial healing may take place in the classroom with the support of the teacher and other school staff. It is important, though, to recognize that teachers usually do not have all the necessary training to help the child deal with traumatic experiences. The team approach is the best way to proceed here. Counsellors and/or Critical Incidence Response Teams (CIRTs), for example, are found in many districts in the province. They may be accessed either through the district's counselling department, or Student Services. In addition, schools may have teams composed of CIRT members and/or school staff including the classroom teacher, the counsellor, and the ESL Specialist.

The English as a Second Language Specialists and classroom teachers can play significant roles in helping refugee children learn English, adjust to a new way of life in a new country, and achieve success in school.

Refugee children have many needs similar to all children and some needs unique to their personal experiences. Coming to a new country and adjusting to a new way of life can be difficult and frightening. Schools can ease the way to fitting in by providing the services and programs that are best suited for this population of children.

Working towards the goal of providing specialized and additional services to refugee children, it is essential to keep in mind that the majority of these students will eventually integrate into grade level classes. When integrated, these children will follow the curriculum as set forth by the Ministry of Education and will be expected to perform to the same standards as their English speaking peers.

How Teachers Can Help

Teachers have the opportunity to create a warm and friendly environment, designing an appropriate program of instruction, and providing opportunities for interaction and understanding.

Creating a Warm and Welcoming Environment

The child's first impression of the learning environment is affected by the manner in which they are welcomed and introduced to their new life.

The resiliency of children to survive toxic environments and traumatic experiences should not be underestimated.

Designing a Program of Instruction

This is where teacher expertise is most demonstrable. All teachers can use teaching and learning strategies to help refugee children succeed in their studies. Both immigrant

Welcoming Strategies for Children

- Be conscious of how the environment may affect refugee children. For example, the fire alarm goes off and students jump out of their seats alarmed. Advance communication may alleviate fear and concern.
- Familiarize new students with the school layout and schedules. As soon as new children arrive at the school ensure that there is a welcoming group or empathetic individuals who will escort the newcomers around the school.
- Encourage children to socialize during school break times, e.g. recess or lunch by assigning responsible students to model school behaviours.
- Be aware that body language may confuse children who do not understand its meaning in the new cultural context. It is not necessary to avoid gestures and the use of body language. Do, however, observe the children's and their parents' reaction to your body language. Learn to make adjustments accordingly.
- Consider innovative ways to welcome refugee parents and their children to the school and classroom.
- Consider staggering hours of initial school attendance because of the student's unfamiliarity with school routines and difficulty in concentrating.
- Consider learning and using international greetings in the classroom.

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and refugee parents are concerned about their children's education. The difference between the two groups is that often the immigrant children come better prepared, with little or no interruption in their education. They complete a term of classes in their homeland and continue with their studies soon after they arrive in Canada.

Some refugee children may not have had any interruption in their education. The majority of these children, however, will have experienced some level of disruption in their learning, ranging from weeks to months or years. Other refugee children have never been able to attend any school, so they may be arriving with few or no literacy skills and no idea of how to perform in school. Once the elements of a safe environment have been established children can slowly begin the schooling process.

The most effective environment to learn English is one where, initially, specialized English language instruction is provided, fully or partially, during the school day. As the children become more proficient in speaking, listening, writing, and reading, they can be integrated into appropriate subject areas to a greater degree. The end result

is total integration in the school mainstream. Depending on the age of arrival, the majority of refugee children will have the potential to complete secondary school successfully and graduate. Working with children to achieve success can be better accomplished with cooperation and collaboration between ESL Specialists and classroom teachers.

There are many ESL resources that discuss tips and strategies which teachers can use with ESL children to maximize learning. Considerations that are worthy of mention, as they have proven particularly effective with ESL learners both in the Specialist and regular classrooms, follow.

The most important thing for refugees is safety. They need a safety net. Canada, by definition, is a safety net.

Dr. Yaya de Andrade, Psychologist, July 26, 1999.

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CAUTION

It is essential to keep in mind that some refugee children have had little or no formal schooling. The starting point for learning may be as fundamental as coping with the expectations of performing a task, or behaving in a way totally foreign to them. Some things refugee children may not know or be able to do are:

- Sit still;
- Hold a pencil for writing;
- Open and close doors, e.g. bathroom doors;
- Use a book;
- Copy passages from an original source;
- Recognize the letters of the alphabet – in any language;
- Do simple arithmetic;
- Understand the concept of Math;
- Recognize that information is organized left to right, top to bottom; and
- Stay in one room for long periods of time.

Tips and Strategies

- **Process**
  Model the process (think-alouds, demonstrations, etc.) of what they are expected to do.
- **Product**
  Provide many samples of the work they are expected to do. Often students do not know what the finished product should look like.
- **Pace**
  The speed at which new material is introduced affects learning. Any visual support (graphic organizers, key words on the board, etc.) will help the ESL learners keep up.
- **Vocabulary**
  Use a variety of strategies to help students build vocabulary, both in general and for specific subject-based terminology that they will need in order to cope in content areas.
- **Teach both language and content**
  Students are expected to express/demonstrate their understanding using appropriate content-based language. Integrating the teaching of content with the learning of language, therefore, facilitates the participation of ESL learners.
- **Adapt**
  Consider how you might adapt the content to help new ESL learners cope. Adapting does not mean watering down but provides *scaffolding* (graphic organizers, key words, pre-reading time, note summaries, etc.) to help ESL learners cope with the volume of new material to be learned.
- **Expect**
  Have clear and high expectations for the children's participation, involvement and academic performance when appropriate.

Source: Adapted from ESL Policy Package, Ministry of Education, British Columbia, 1999.

Providing Opportunities for Interaction

Children learn best by interacting with their peers and practicing what they have learned. Classroom interaction also helps teachers ascertain the level of need of individual children. This is one area where teachers will be able to discern the extent to which refugee children are handling their adjustment to Canadian society, and can be an opportunity for helping refugee children to begin to deal with their traumatic experiences.

Children who are shy need to be encouraged to participate in the context of an accepting, safe learning environment in which class members can confidently express themselves. Children who are reluctant to interact with others need to be encouraged to work in situations where they have a significant role to play in the success of the group. It is through meaningful interactions that children develop friendships.

Instructional Strategies that Facilitate Classroom Interaction

- Vary group size – pairs, triads, small groups, circle of knowledge;
- Use cooperative learning strategies – brainstorming, role-playing, jigsaw, think-pair-share;
- Use questioning strategies;
- Provide opportunities to practice conflict resolution techniques;
- Focus on similarities among children and cultures; as children learn about the things they have in common with others, they develop a sense of belonging and overall comfort in the classroom; and

Communicate that school wide rules and behavioural expectations apply to all children equally and equitably.

Sources: Adapted from ASCD, *Educating Everybody's Children* pp. 24, 38, 65, 146, 149, 152; Campbell, B. *The Multiple Intelligences Handbook*, p.50; and Meyers, M. *Teaching to Diversity*, pp.72-82.

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Some Things to Avoid

As noted earlier, refugee children often come from extremely traumatic backgrounds. Therefore some typical school tasks may not be appropriate for them in the beginning stages of their adjustments.

- **Show and Tell**
  This activity may prove to be a painful reminder of what they no longer have.
- **Current Events Discussions**
  Current Events is a part of daily work in many classrooms. However, it ***would be ill advised*** to ask refugee students to tell about their experiences in refugee camps, discuss their views of the war in their homeland, or comments on refugees in general. When students are prepared to discuss the more sensitive areas of their past, they will do so.
- **Detentions**
  Giving detentions may be a totally alien concept both to the students and their parents. It may also be construed as a form of arrest. It is important to explain clearly to both students and parents (translators may be needed) the normal routine of rewards and punishments in Canadian schools.
- **Busy Work**
  Giving students work that simply has them filling in worksheets is not recommended. All work should clearly relate to the subject area and language needs of the lesson.
- **Seating**
  Many refugees have little or no school experiences. They need to be placed next to a good role model and close to the teacher so that comprehension can be monitored, and they can learn how to conduct themselves in schools and classrooms.

Prescribed Learning Outcomes: Social Studies K-11

Grade	It is expected that students will:
K-1	describe how families can be similar and different *(p. A-3)*
2-3	demonstrate awareness of British Columbia's and Canada's diverse heritage *(p. A-4)*
4	describe how people's basic needs are met in a variety of cultures *(p. A-6)*
5	demonstrate understanding of why immigrants come to Canada, the challenges they face, and their contributions to Canada *(p. A-8)*
6	demonstrate appreciation of contributions of a variety of cultures to Canada and the world
7	compare how various cultures meet common needs *(p. A-12)*; and - describe ways cultures have sought to preserve identity and adapt to change *(p. A-12)* - identify factors that influence the development and decline of world civilizations; *(p.14)* - describe a variety of diverse cultural traditions and world religions *(p.14)*
9	- identify the roots of present-day-regional, cultural, and social issues within Canada; *(p.24)* - assess how identity is shaped by a variety of factors, including family, gender, belief systems, ethnicity, and nationality, *(p.24)*
10	- identify the influence of immigration on, and the contribution of immigrants to, the development of Canada
11	- demonstrate skills associated with active citizenship, including the ability to collaborate and consult with others, respect and promote respect for the contributions of other team member, and interact confidently, *(p. A-4)*; - identify elements that contribute to the regional, cultural, and ethnic diversity of Canadian society, *(p. A-5)*; - identify major Canadian social policies and programs and their impact on Canadian society, *(p. A-5)*; - recognize the importance of both individual and collective action in responsible global citizenship, *(p. A-5)*; - identify and assess social issues facing Canadians, *(p. A-5)*; - describe and assess Canada's participation in world affairs, *(p. A-6)*; - explain Canada's political system and contrast it with other political systems, *(p. A-6)*; - identify and assess political issues facing Canadians, *(p. A-6)*; and - demonstrate awareness of the disparities in the distribution of wealth in Canada and the world, *(p. A-7)*.

Source: Adapted from Social Studies K to 7, Integrated Resource Package, 1998; Social Studies 8 to 10, Integrated Resource Package, 1997; and Social Studies 11, Integrated Resource Package, 1997.

Curricular Connections

World events are often learning opportunities for children everywhere. Canada's active role in world concerns makes it possible for school children to learn and understand Canadian society and world cultures. It is possible to link the events in the Balkans, for example, with Ministry Prescribed Learning Outcomes for Social Studies, Career and Personal Planning, and English. Opposite are some examples of the Prescribed Learning Outcomes, by grade, through which elementary teachers and secondary social studies teachers can introduce the topic of Kosovo.

Resources

The following agencies may be of great help in providing additional assistance to Kosovar refugees. Please note that possible services may be provided in your community by organizations not listed below.

Human Resources

Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) such as Immigrant Services or other agencies identified to work with refugees in your community, e.g. church groups, cultural centers. The **Red Book** (**www.vcn.bc.ca/isv**) contains a list of agencies that are willing and able to support the schools. Below are a few.

- **Bridge Health Clinic**
  Phone (604) 877-8550; Fax (604) 877-0820
- **Canadian Immigration and Citizenship**
  www.cic.gc.ca
  or within Vancouver areas phone 666-2171;
  outside Vancouver area phone 1-888-242-2100.
- **Critical Incidence Response Teams** (CIRTs)
  Find out from your school district's counselling or student services department who the team members are and be prepared to work with them.
- **Local Health Regional Offices**
- **Vancouver Association for the Survivors of Torture**
  The Vancouver phone number is (604) 299-3539,
  or **www.amssa.bc.ca**

Learning Resources

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